

**WASHINGTON** – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) said the National Veterans Cemetery in Montevallo will honor the valor that uniformed men and women in Alabama have demonstrated in the defense of freedom.

Bachus and Department of Veterans Affairs Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs William Tuerk today are briefing members of the Alabama state legislature and invited guests on the \$26 million federal investment being made in the development of the cemetery that will be located next to The American Village in Shelby County.

"There is no better way that we can show our appreciation for the honor and commitment of the men and women who have served our nation in uniform," Bachus said.

The cemetery will provide a serene and secure resting place for area veterans and stand as a lasting shrine to their dedication, service, and patriotism. More than 200,000 veterans in the Birmingham region do not currently have convenient access to burial in a national cemetery, according to a report prepared for Congress.

When fully built, the cemetery will stretch over 479 acres in the picturesque Shoal Creek Valley. It is expected to meet the burial needs of veterans and spouses for the next 50 years.

Land acquisition for the cemetery was completed when the Veterans Administration purchased the Montevallo property for \$8 million this past July. Construction plans became a reality in December when Bachus announced the approval of \$18.5 million in federal funding for development of the site.

Congressman Bachus said, "The cemetery will honor the veterans who have served our country and safeguarded our liberty. In Alabama, many brave men and women have willingly answered the call of duty and deserve our gratitude. Like Arlington and Gettysburg, this cemetery will be a lasting shrine to freedom and hopefully lead all of us to reflect on the commitment it takes to preserve our wonderful democracy. It is very appropriate that our area, the birthplace of Veterans Day, has been selected as the location for a beautiful new national cemetery and I encourage the state legislature to continue its own work in support of this important project. This

is truly an initiative that can bring all of us all together in support of the veterans who honor us with their service."

Department of Veterans Affairs Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs William Tuerk said, "Burial in a national cemetery is a tangible way that the nation can demonstrate its appreciation for the service of those who have worn the uniform. A VA national cemetery is, of course, an honored resting place. But it is more – it is also a lasting and inspiring memorial to the values of duty and patriotism that have been a constant for America's veterans throughout the generations. The Department of Veterans Affairs is honored to locate this national shrine in Montevallo. It will be a source of pride for the people who reside nearby, and for all who journey here to visit."

The Executive Director of The American Village, Tom Walker, said, (proposed) "It is a great honor to have this cemetery built right next to The American Village. Our mission is to use history to teach the values that sustain the United States as a free and democratic country. My hope is that after visiting the cemetery and learning at The American Village, people will develop a renewed appreciation and determination to preserve the liberty that is our birthright as Americans. We thank Congressman Bachus and the Veterans Administration for all they have done to make this happen. The program is co-hosted by The American Village and by the Joint Legislative Committee on the new National Veterans Cemetery which was created by the Legislature to search for ways to support this important federal initiative."

The National Cemetery Administration, an agency within the VA, is overseeing construction of the site. Quincy Whitehead, who had been director of the Barrancas National Cemetery in Pensacola, Florida, has been appointed cemetery director. Civil Consultants, Inc. was selected to perform design work.